

# 7

## Give a Dog a Good Name

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN A PERSON WHO HAS BEEN A GOOD WORKER begins to turn in shoddy work? You can fire him or her, but that really doesn't solve anything. You can berate the worker, but this usually causes resentment. Henry Henke, a service manager for a large truck dealership in Lowell, Indiana, had a mechanic whose work had become less than satisfactory. Instead of bawling him out or threatening him, Mr. Henke called him into his office and had a heart-to-heart talk with him.

"Bill," he said, "you are a fine mechanic. You have been in this line of work for a good number of years. You have repaired many vehicles to the customers' satisfaction. In fact, we've had a number of compliments about the good work you have done. Yet, of late, the time you take to complete each job has been increasing and your work has not been up to your own old standards. Because you have been such an outstanding mechanic in the past, I felt sure you would want to know that I am not happy with this situation, and perhaps jointly we could find some way to correct the problem."

Bill responded that he hadn't realized he had been falling down

in his duties and assured his boss that the work he was getting was not out of his range of expertise and he would try to improve in the future.

Did he do it? You can be sure he did. He once again became a fast and thorough mechanic. With that reputation Mr. Henke had given him to live up to, how could he do anything else but turn out work comparable to that which he had done in the past.

"The average person," said Samuel Vauclain, then president of the Baldwin Locomotive Works, "can be led readily if you have his or her respect and if you show that you respect that person for some kind of ability."

In short, if you want to improve a person in a certain respect, act as though that particular trait were already one of his or her outstanding characteristics. Shakespeare said, "Assume a virtue, if you have it not." And it might be well to assume and state openly that other people have the virtue you want them to develop. Give them a fine reputation to live up to, and they will make prodigious efforts rather than see you disillusioned.

Georgette Leblanc, in her book *Souvenirs, My Life with Maeterlinck*, describes the startling transformation of a humble Belgian Cinderella.

"A servant girl from a neighboring hotel brought my meals," she wrote. "She was called 'Marie the Dishwasher' because she had started her career as a scullery assistant. She was a kind of monster, cross-eyed, bandy-legged, poor in flesh and spirit.

"One day, while she was holding my plate of macaroni in her red hand, I said to her point-blank, 'Marie, you do not know what treasures are within you.'

"Accustomed to holding back her emotion, Marie waited a few moments, not daring to risk the slightest gesture for fear of a catastrophe. Then she put the dish on the table, sighed and said ingenuously, 'Madame, I would never have believed it.' She did not doubt, she did not ask a question. She simply went back to the kitchen and repeated what I had said, and such is the force

## *Be a Leader*

of faith that no one made fun of her. From that day on, she was even given a certain consideration. But the most curious change of all occurred in the humble Marie herself. Believing she was the tabernacle of unseen marvels, she began taking care of her face and body so carefully that her starved youth seemed to bloom and modestly hide her plainness.

"Two months later, she announced her coming marriage with the nephew of the chef. 'I'm going to be a lady,' she said, and thanked me. A small phrase had changed her entire life."

Georgette Leblanc had given "Marie the Dishwasher" a reputation to live up to—and that reputation had transformed her.

Bill Parker, a sales representative for a food company in Daytona Beach, Florida, was very excited about the new line of products his company was introducing and was upset when the manager of a large independent food market turned down the opportunity to carry it in his store. Bill brooded all day over this rejection and decided to return to the store before he went home that evening and try again.

"Jack," he said, "since I left this morning I realized I hadn't given you the entire picture of our new line, and I would appreciate some of your time to tell you about the points I omitted. I have respected the fact that you are always willing to listen and are big enough to change your mind when the facts warrant a change."

Could Jack refuse to give him another hearing? Not with that reputation to live up to.

One morning Dr. Martin Fitzhugh, a dentist in Dublin, Ireland, was shocked when one of his patients pointed out to him that the metal cup holder which she was using to rinse her mouth was not very clean. True, the patient drank from the paper cup, not the holder, but it certainly was not professional to use tarnished equipment.

When the patient left, Dr. Fitzhugh retreated to his private office to write a note to Bridgit, the charwoman, who came twice a week to clean his office. He wrote:

## HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

My dear Bridgit,

I see you so seldom, I thought I'd take the time to thank you for the fine job of cleaning you've been doing. By the way, I thought I'd mention that since two hours, twice a week, is a very limited amount of time, please feel free to work an extra half hour from time to time if you feel you need to do those "once-in-a-while" things like polishing the cup holders and the like. I, of course, will pay you for the extra time.

"The next day, when I walked into my office," Dr. Fitzhugh reported, "my desk had been polished to a mirror-like finish, as had my chair, which I nearly slid out of. When I went into the treatment room I found the shiniest, cleanest chrome-plated cup holder I had ever seen nestled in its receptacle. I had given my charwoman a fine reputation to live up to, and because of this small gesture she outperformed all her past efforts. How much additional time did she spend on this? That's right—none at all."

There is an old saying: "Give a dog a bad name and you may as well hang him." But give him a good name—and see what happens!

When Mrs. Ruth Hopkins, a fourth-grade teacher in Brooklyn, New York, looked at her class roster the first day of school, her excitement and joy of starting a new term was tinged with anxiety. In her class this year she would have Tommy T., the school's most notorious "bad boy." His third-grade teacher had constantly complained about Tommy to colleagues, the principal and anyone else who would listen. He was not just mischievous; he caused serious discipline problems in the class, picked fights with the boys, teased the girls, was fresh to the teacher, and seemed to get worse as he grew older. His only redeeming feature was his ability to learn rapidly and master the school work easily.

Mrs. Hopkins decided to face the "Tommy problem" immediately. When she greeted her new students, she made little comments to each of them: "Rose, that's a pretty dress you are wearing," "Alicia, I hear you draw beautifully." When she came

## *Be a Leader*

to Tommy, she looked him straight in the eyes and said, "Tommy, I understand you are a natural leader. I'm going to depend on you to help me make this class the best class in the fourth grade this year." She reinforced this over the first few days by complimenting Tommy on everything he did and commenting on how this showed what a good student he was. With that reputation to live up to, even a nine-year-old couldn't let her down—and he didn't.

If you want to excel in that difficult leadership role of changing the attitude or behavior of others, use . . .

---

### PRINCIPLE 7

Give the other person a fine reputation to live up to.

---